Department of Commerce
Safety Report

March 2003

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Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for March 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in March 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for February 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the March results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Safety Inspections at HCHB and Silver Spring

Comprehensive safety and health inspections were conducted at the Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Silver Spring Metro Center facilities. The inspections were coordinated by the Department's Office of Occupational Safety and Health and the NOAA Environmental Compliance and Safety Division. Inspections of *all* work spaces, including offices, in the buildings were performed.

Some of the safety issues that were identified at the Herbert C. Hoover Building included:

- Obstructed emergency exits - several doors and aisles leading to doors were blocked by boxes and other items.
- Electrical panels were missing covers or panels were blocked by equipment or materials.
- Multi-outlet strips and/or surge protector strips were found to be plugged one into another, potentially creating an overload for the circuit to which they were connected.
- Several space heaters did not have safety cut-off switches.
- Confined spaces in mechanical areas were not properly controlled.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillation

Each year approximately one million Americans suffer a heart attack. About 460,000 of those heart attacks are fatal, and about half of those deaths occur before the person reaches the hospital. The chances of surviving a heart attack increase significantly if cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is started promptly. This life saving measure can be performed by anyone, with the proper training. It is very important that employees receive training and certification in CPR. The training is offered by several organizations, including the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association. Information on CPR training provided by the American Red Cross is available at http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/courses/ and from the American Heart Association at http://216.185.112.41/courses.html

If someone is stricken by a heart attack, the American Heart Association recommends that 911 be called immediately and CPR started at once. If your facility has other procedures in place, such as calling a central emergency number, then follow those procedures. It is important to keep the victim calm, loosen any tight clothing and continue to administer CPR until the paramedics arrive.

In addition to CPR, the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) is another critical life saving procedure that can resuscitate heart attack victims. Automated external defibrillators have been installed in many Commerce facilities and additional ones will be installed in the weeks ahead. These devices analyze the victim's heart rhythm through electrodes applied to the chest, and advise the operator whether an electrical shock is needed. If a shock is required, the AED will deliver an electrical shock to the heart through electrode pads to terminate potentially fatal arrhythmias. Most AEDs are designed for use by non-medical personnel who have been trained to operate them. If your facility has AEDs, or is planning to acquire them, training in their use should be made available to as many employees as possible. Studies have shown that many heart attack victims have survived because of the rapid administration of CPR and the use of AEDs.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects February 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200{,}000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year[1]
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

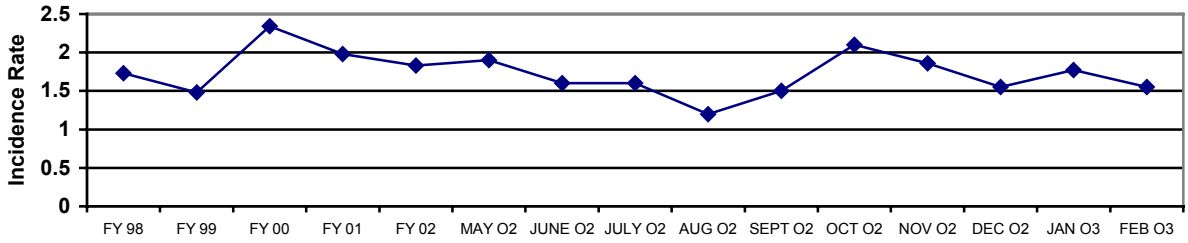
[1] The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

For comparative purposes, table 1A, included as page nine of this report, provides data that more closely correspond to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

Total Case Incidence Rate Trend



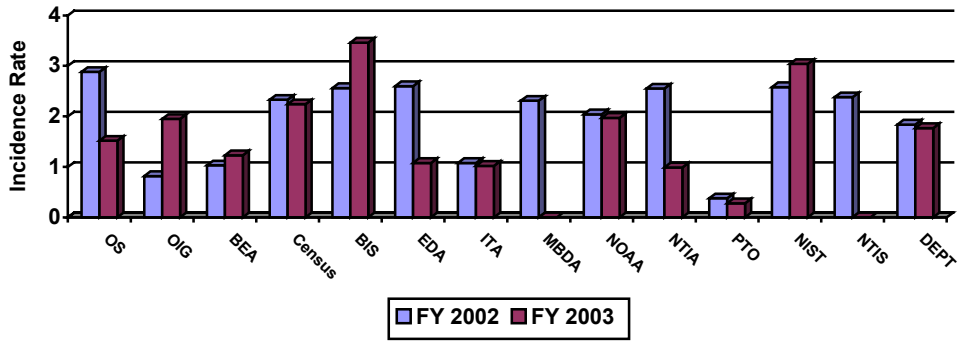
Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is down from FY 2002 and FY 2001.** The TCIR is 1.77 for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. The incident rate of 1.55 for February 2003 is higher than the February 2002 incident rate of 1.32. The difference is attributable to a higher number of slips and falls in icy conditions. A total of 250 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003, compared to 274 at this time last year.

- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has a higher TCIR for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** Most of the recent injuries at NIST were the result of employees slipping on ice. The TCIR for the Office of the Secretary is down significantly, 47 percent, from FY 2002.

- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Develop Administration (EDA) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) have significantly lower TCIRs for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002.**

Chart 2



- **The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.** The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.32 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating

the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **"Slips/Falls" continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** "Slips/falls" accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 48 percent in February 2003. Many of the recent slips and falls were weather-related. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.

- **"Struck and Contact" injuries were second in frequency for January 2003.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 18 percent in February 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.

- **"Exertion" injuries remain a concern.** "Exertion" injuries were 20 percent and 12 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and February 2003, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects, and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.

- **"Exposures" were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002 and two percent for February 2003. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 4

Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for

FY 2002

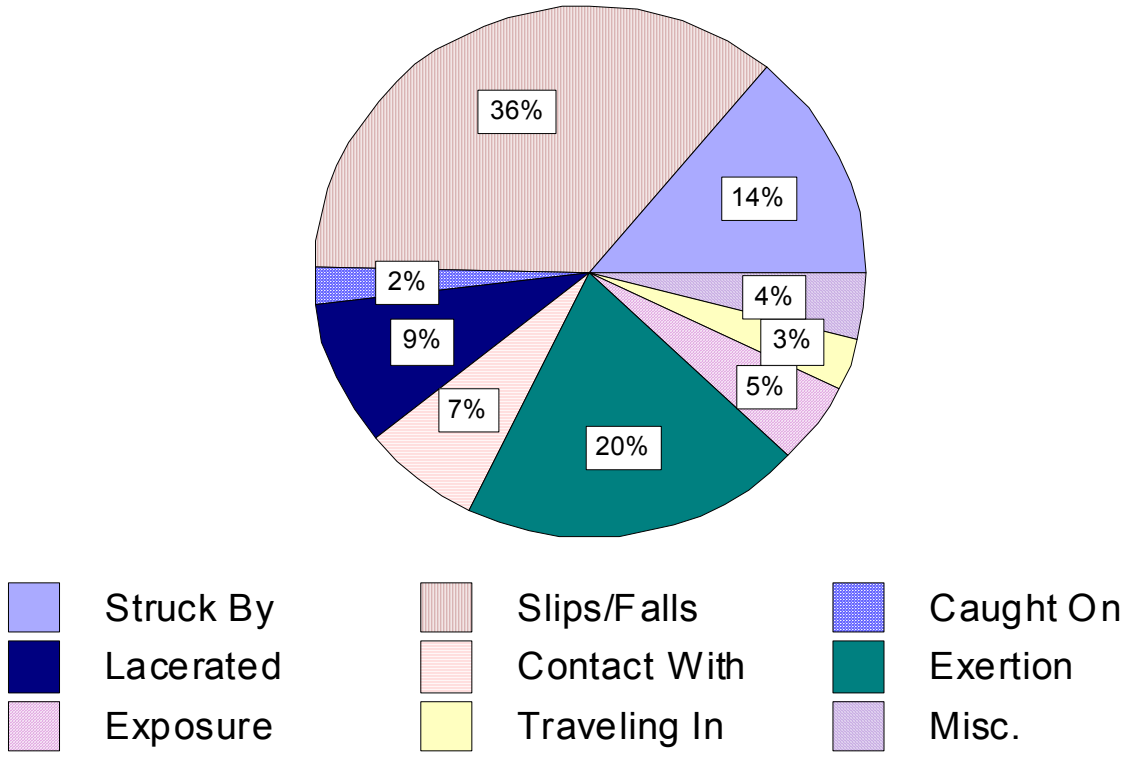


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

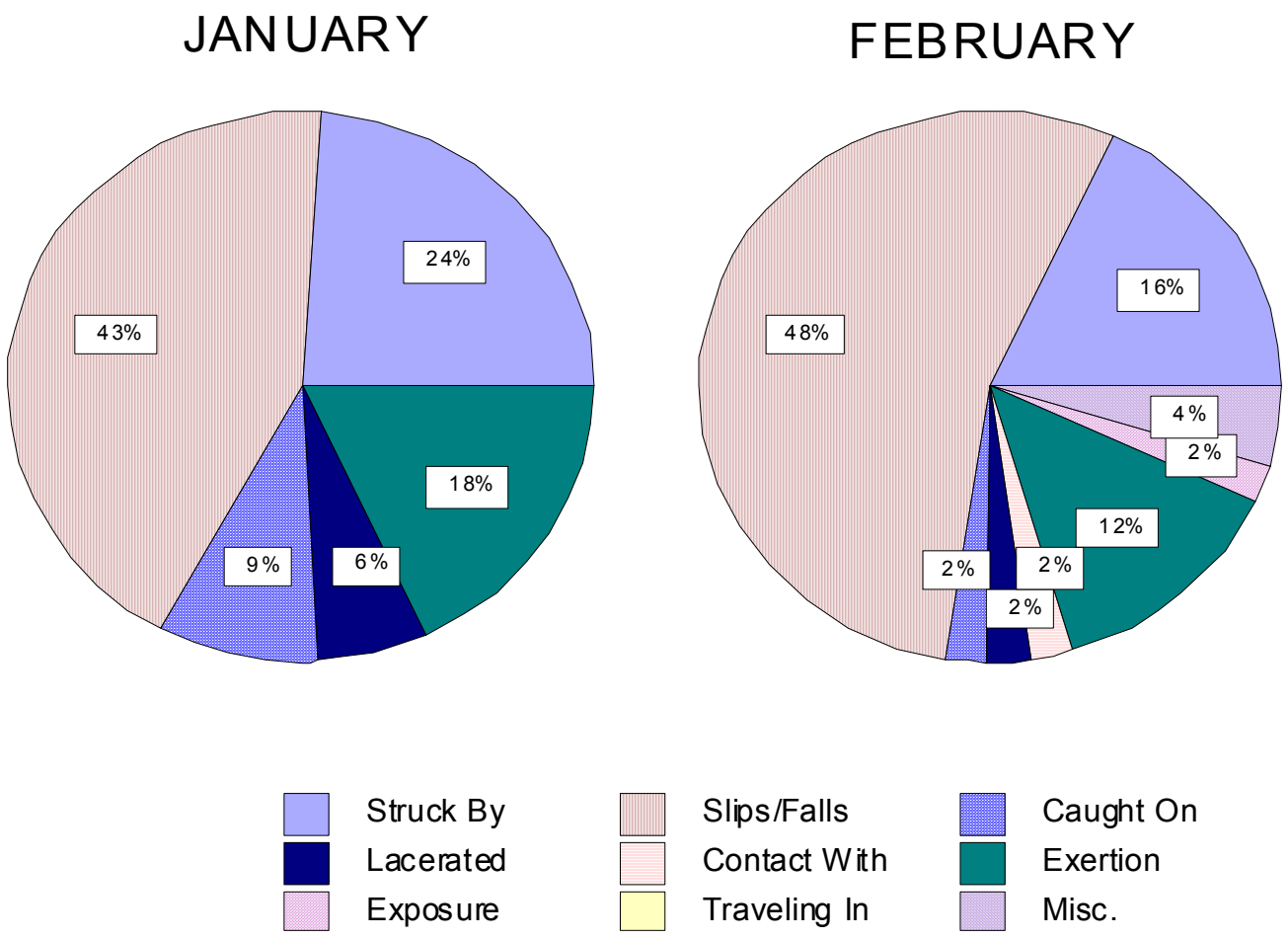


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		January 2003		February 2003		FY 2003 (To Date) Actual	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	1	1.52	0	0	5	1.52
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	1	9.73	1	1.95
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	1	3.07	0	0	2	1.23
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	18	2.21	22	2.70	91	2.24
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	1	3.47	0	0	5	3.46
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	1.08
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	0	0	0	0	7	1.02
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	18	1.93	13	1.39	92	1.97
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	0	0	1	0.99
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	2	.40	0	0	7	0.28
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6.20
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	9	3.70	8	3.29	37	3.04
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	50	1.77	44	1.55	250	1.77
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.
** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		January 2003		February 2003		FY 2003 (To Date) Actual	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	1	1.52	0	0	5	1.52
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	1	9.73	1	1.95
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	1	3.07	0	0	1	0.61
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	15	1.84	16	1.97	65	1.60
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	1	3.47	0	0	5	3.46
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	0	0	0	0	7	1.02
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	16	1.72	9	0.96	77	1.65
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	0	0	0	0
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	2	.40	0	0	7	0.28
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	4	1.64	6	2.47	19	1.56
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	40	1.41	32	1.13	187	1.32
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.
** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through February 2003)

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	24	56	27	13	16	8	8	6	4	3	1	1	2	5	2	1	230
Falls/Slips	72	59	29	153	96	46	19	22	13	13	7	1	5	7	3	10	2	1	558
Caught On An Object	4	5	5	9	8	1	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	42
Cuts/Bites	20	26	3	36	19	4	12	9	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	137
Contact With An Object	13	19	1	24	11	3	1	6	0	6	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	96
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	24	54	37	18	7	17	7	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	3	307
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	2	7	6	3	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	70
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	4	8	21	3	1	8	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	62
TOTAL	216	228	92	357	241	91	60	76	37	31	24	7	10	18	7	22	23	5	1545

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends.

Table 2A

INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through February 2003)

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	**01**	**02**	**03**	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	0	6	0	1	35
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	10
Exposure to Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total	2	1	1	5	4	2	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	1	4	2	0	8	9	5	75

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stoke.

Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at http://ohrm.doc.gov/.

During the month of March, we received 50 responses through the Web Site survey, and for the first time since the survey began, the majority of employees who responded indicated an improvement in safety conditions at their work areas.

Safety Survey Statistics

The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

Safety Survey
March Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percent**
No	39	78%
Yes	11	22%

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percent**
No	19	38%
Yes	31	62%

Geographical Location		
State	**Count**	**Percent**
AK	1	2.00%
CO	1	2.00%
DC	6	12.00%
FL	1	2.00%
MA	1	2.00%
MD	9	18.00%
OR	1	2.00%
PA	19	38.00%
RI	1	2.00%
TX	1	2.00%
VA	7	14.00%
WA	1	2.00%
WI	1	2.00%

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	**Count**	**Percent**
CENSIS	7	14.00%
EDA	1	2.00%
ITA	2	4.00%
NIST	2	4.00%
NOAA	29	58.00%
OS	3	6.00%
PTO	6	12.00%